

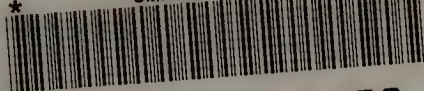
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Executive Summary

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation
Draft Management Plan

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Massachusetts Department of
Environmental Management
November 1979

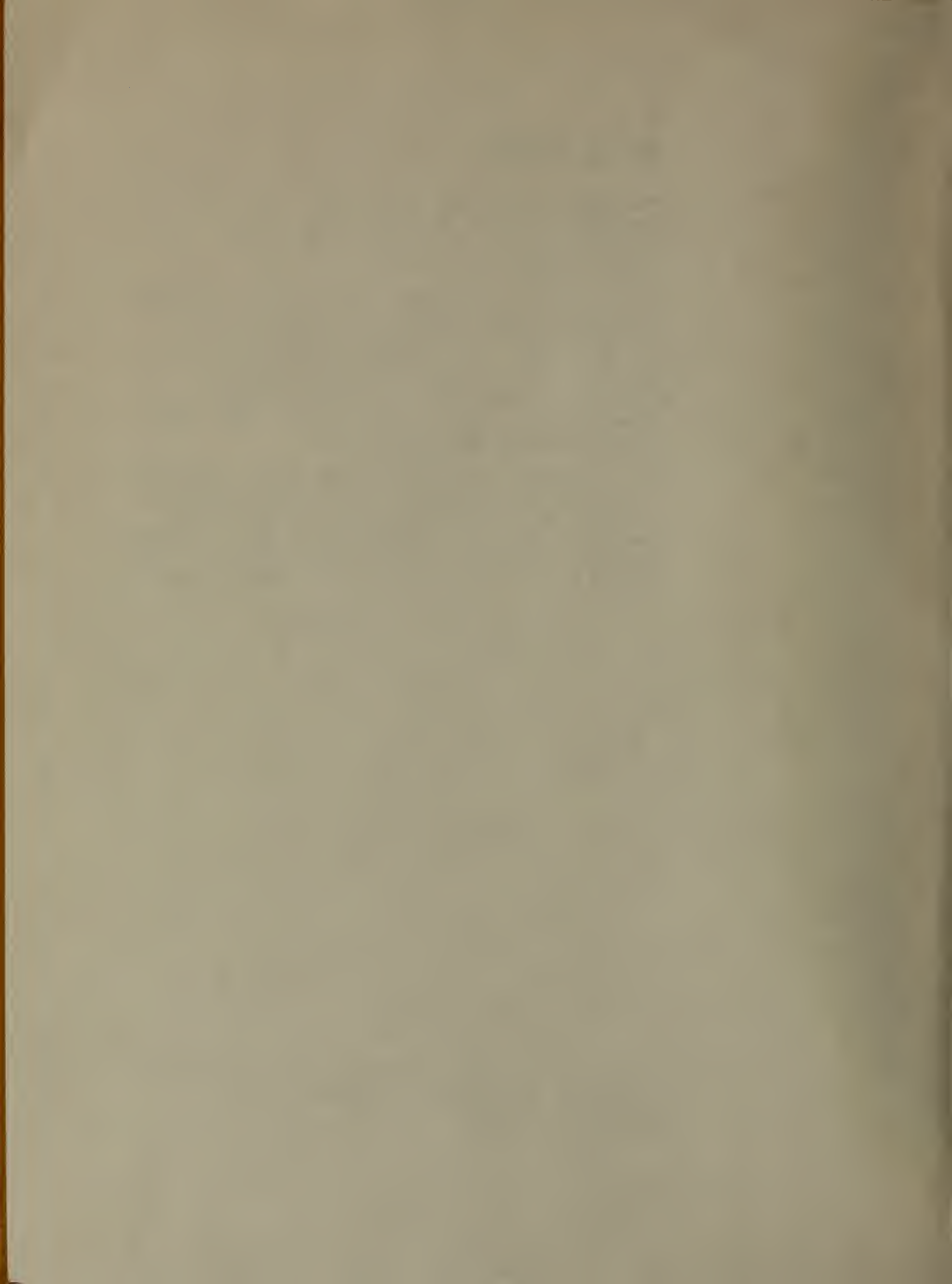
Introduction

The goal of the Department of Environmental Management is to ensure proper use and administration of Wachusett Mt. State Reservation through management planning.

This Executive Summary of the Draft Wachusett Mountain State Reservation Management Plan is intended to provide a brief overview of the management objectives and work program for the Reservation. Detailed information concerning specific management procedures, programs, facilities, etc., may be obtained from the Draft Management Plan.

The Executive Summary and the Draft Management Plan were developed by a Task Force composed of Department of Environmental Management personnel and representatives of the Wachusett Mountain Advisory Council with continual input from the full Council and Department officials.

Publication Number 11609-16-400-11-79-CR
Approved by Alfred C. Holland, State
Purchasing Agent.



Wachusett Mountain : A Resource

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation, located in the towns of Westminster and Princeton, Worcester County, is an important natural, historical and recreational resource. Wachusett Mountain, a monadnock with an elevation of 2006', accounts for most of the land area of the Reservation. As a natural resource, it is the most important topographic feature and scenic viewing site in central and eastern Massachusetts. The 1955 acres that comprise Wachusett Mountain State Reservation are part of a regional open space network totalling 8500 contiguous acres. The thin sandy loam soils support vegetation typical of the region such as northern hardwoods, hemlock, white pine, mountain laurel, rhododendrons, witch hazel, blueberry, orchids and dwarf ginseng. The Reservation shelters an abundance of wildlife, 77 species of birds and over 28 mammal species. Five minor watersheds are contained within the Reservation, which is also part of the divide between the Nashua River and Ware River Watersheds.

As an historical resource, the Reservation has been a major focus of man's settlement of Central Massachusetts. Wachusett, meaning "by the Great Hill," was a hunting ground of a branch of the Nipmuck Indians who populated this central area during the 1600's. During the King Philip's War in 1675 Wachusett was the hub of Indian recruitment. Colonists in the 1700's began subsistence farming and by the beginning of the 19th century much of the land had been deforested for agriculture. Stone walls now remaining on the lower slopes offer testimony to this use. During the late 1800's the Mountain was discovered as a summer resort with the construction of a summit road and hotel. In the years following two more hotels eventually replaced the first one with the last hotel burning in 1970. Through state legislation, the Mountain was first designated a reservation in 1899.

As a recreation resource, the Reservation contains 16.4 miles of hiking/snow shoeing trails, 11 miles of cross-country trails, 37 acres of down hill skiing with a lodge and base facilities, picnic areas, and a

visitors center with historical and natural history exhibits of the area.

The views and vistas of the mountain, the spring azalea and the fall foliage attract as many as 10,000 visitors in one day, while during the winter skiers may total 1200.

The vegetation, wildlife, water resources, topography, aesthetics, history and recreation are the elements which are incorporated into that which is considered the "resource." It is the need for continuous, rational and intelligent management of this resource which prompted the Department of Environmental Management to undertake the development of a management plan for Wachusett Mt. State Reservation.

The Management Plan

The purpose of this management plan is to provide a policy framework for the accomplishment of long term objectives and five-year work program by which the Department can effectively manage the Reservation for public enjoyment and conserve it as a natural and historical resource.

The plan attempts to set the framework by establishing a set of overall objectives for the Reservation from which the work program was derived. The plan itself is based on a system of zoning the land according to its sensitivity to management and use. It is the intention of the Department to review the plan every 5 years to evaluate the zoning system and to revise the work program as needed.

Topographical Map



The Objectives

These long-term objectives are policy statements to guide decision making by which the Department of Environmental Management will manage the Reservation.

- * Protect the resource values of the Reservation against avoidable damage by over use, vandalism and natural causes.
- * Provide and sustain high quality year-round recreation opportunities compatible to the Mountain.
- * Maintain and enhance the scenic quality of areas both viewed from the surrounding landscape as well as from within the Reservation; while at the same time promote views of the countryside from the Mountain.
- * Maintain or improve the quality and the quantity of water delivered by the watersheds of the Reservation.
- * Make wise use of the Mountain's renewable resources, especially provide a sustained yield of timber products.
- * Provide a consistent habitat for flora and fauna that have historically been associated with this area.
- * Continue to recognize and respect the significance of Wachusett Mountain as an historical resource.
- * Acquire those properties necessary to retain the natural integrity of the area.

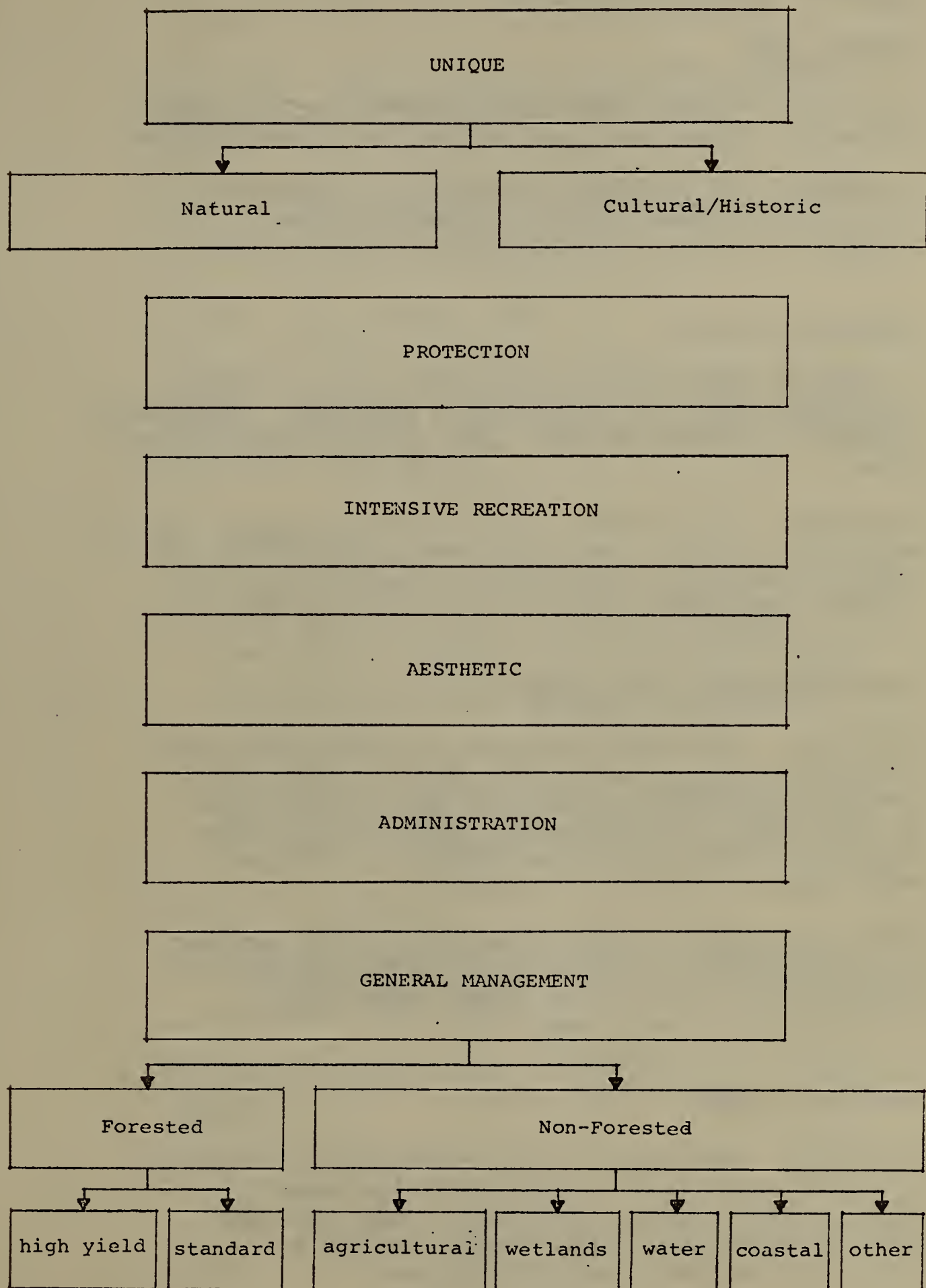
Land Use Zones

Lands controlled by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forests & Parks must meet the demands of many uses and supply various services for the benefit of the public. To satisfy these requirements and provide a satisfactory mix of outputs with minimum conflicts, the Division has developed a system of "zoning" for all Department property. This approach divides each site into six major categories of land types that are ranked according to the sensitivity of the land to management and use. The diagram on page six graphically displays this ranking from most sensitive areas with minimal use, to least sensitive areas with more intensive use, and shows sub-categories of two zones.

In developing this system, criteria were selected for fitting the land into its proper category, and general management policies were stated. More specifically, five main concerns; recreation, visual resources, wildlife habitat, transportation systems and silviculture, were chosen and detailed policies and practices were recorded for each zone. For comparison and summary a table outlining this information is included in the document.

This system of zoning is the basis for all future management decisions and the heart of the Wachusett Mountain Management Plan. The general objectives for each zone can guide decisions over the long run while the specific statements in each of the five categories help protect and conserve the resources through guidance in short term treatment of State properties.

Zones Diagram



Zone Descriptions

UNIQUE ZONE

Criteria: Natural areas of unique floral, faunal, cultural, historical, or geological significance.

Management Objectives: Preserve or maintain the site for bona fide, non-destructive scientific study for the public's enrichment.

PROTECTION ZONE

Criteria: Lands are fragile in that the natural resources could be irreparably damaged. Sustained, excessively steep slopes make up the bulk of this zone.

Management Objectives: Protect soil, water values and other natural resources associated with the site by severely limiting or constraining disruptive management activities and intensive use.

INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

Criteria: Developed recreation facilities such as picnic areas, nationally designated trails, camping, swimming and nature study areas make up this zone. Areas deemed suitable for the expansion of existing facilities or future development are also included.

Management Objectives: Provide a high quality of recreational experience on sites capable of sustaining a relatively large number of participants at one time.

AESTHETIC ZONE

Criteria: Corridors in the foreground landscape of medium and heavily travelled highways, primary State Forest and Park roads and main State Forests and Parks roads leading to intensive recreational facilities.

Management Objectives: Provide a "natural" appearing environment for the enjoyment of persons traveling through a given area, through the application of modified silvicultural practices.

ADMINISTRATION ZONE

Criteria: Lands adjacent to State Forests and Parks administration facilities such as headquarters buildings.

Management Objectives: Maintain in a manner that fosters efficient administration of Division facilities and lands.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT ZONE

Criteria: All lands not fitting any of the above categories are included in the General Management Zone. This zone is further divided into two categories.

A. FORESTED

High Yield: Areas which produce, through the application of intensive timber management activities, sustained yields of wood products, wildlife, water and opportunities for permitted extensive recreation.

Standard: Areas which produce goods and services through the application of extensive forest management activities.

B. NON-FORESTED

The non-forested category has several components - agricultural, wetlands, water, coastal, and other.

Management Objectives: Maintain in a manner to enhance resource values, yet minimize unfavorable impacts.

Table of Land Use Zones

	RECREATION	VISUAL RESOURCE	WILDLIFE HABITAT	TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM	SILVICULTURE
UNIQUE ZONE 0 Acres	No intensive activities. General public use not encouraged - dispersed, non-motor uses may be permitted.	*Retain natural state. *No utility corridors.	*Emergency management activities only. *Improvements for unique fauna.	*No roads or trails. *Adjacent construction to have buffer.	*No vegetation cutting. *Non-destructive re- search permitted.
PROTECTION ZONE 194 Acres	No intensive activities. Dispersed, non-motor uses may be permitted.	*Retain natural state. *On site utility corridors only.	*Emergency management activities only.	*Use of existing systems. *Necessary construction on stable areas only.	*No conventional com- mercial timber sales. *Limited cutting for aesthetics, maintenance and disease control.
INTENSIVE RECREATION 284 Acres	All recognized activ- ities permitted. Facilities designed to minimize site impacts.	*On site utilities only. *Forestry operations meet "Slash Law" re- quirements. *Facilities in harmony with site.	*Retain vegetation with high wildlife values. *Small improvement projects. *Native plantings.	*No logging road use during peak recreational seasons.	*Practices for disease control, recreational enhancement, inter- pretation or wildlife improvement.
AESTHETIC ZONE 115 Acres	All recognized activ- ities when appropriate.	*On site utilities only. *Forestry operations meet "Slash Law" re- quirements.	*Limited activities for flora and fauna.	*Roads maintained for safe passage of private vehicles.	*Modified practices for removal of hazards, disease control and visual improvement.
ADMINISTRATION ZONE 11 Acres	Only when compatible with efficient administration.	*Retain native vegeta- tion when possible. *Blend facilities with landscape.	*Retain high value vegetation when possible.	*Roads and bridges to support 60,000 pound loads.	*Diseased, hazardous and defective trees may be removed.
GENERAL MANAGEMENT 1,361 Acres	All recognized activ- ities permitted.	*Slash treatment near roads and trails. *Avoid geometric management patterns. *Utility corridors permitted.	*Management to reflect native species. *Protect water features and high value vegetation.	*Temporary roads approv- ed by forester and re- planted after operations. *Permanent roads built to best advantage for future use.	*Even-aged and uneven- aged systems used. *Timber stand improve- ment operations used. *Intensive management only on high yield areas.

NOTE: Acreage figures included here apply specifically to
the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation.

WATER QUALITY

- * Continue standard forest management practices to avoid excessive run-off during and after timber harvesting operations.
- * Maintain and improve sanitary facilities to prevent water contamination.

There presently exists a great need for additional sanitary facilities at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation. The present facilities are located in the Visitor's Center and have a capacity of 1250 gallons. Records of public use, indicate the need for a much larger facility. Actual location of the facility will require engineering studies to determine suitable sites. The following sites are being considered; contact station, the North Road area and the Summit Road area.

RECREATION RESOURCES

- * Continue to work closely with the ski area operations to provide safe, quality skiing.
- * Support the ski area expansion from the present capacity level (750) to a level that does not unduly impact the resource and abutting communities, contingent upon the findings of the Environmental Impact Study.
- * Prohibit camping, swimming and off-road use of vehicles on the Reservation.
- * Enforce new rules and regulations relative to hunting.

No person shall at any time hunt or shoot at any wildlife, and/or wild animal within 500' of any designated Division picnic area, camping area residence, service building, latrine, parking lot or cabin, or 150' from any hard surfaced roads.

Work Program & Recommendations

The following five-year work program and recommendations were developed by combining those management practices that are necessary to implement both the overall objectives for the Reservation and management objectives of the land use zones.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

FIRE CONTROL

- * Improve signage relative to fire safety.
- * Maintain clear pump access to streams and ponds.
- * Maintain fireplaces and survey routinely for combustible materials as a fire prevention measure.
- * Maintain existing waterholes.

INSECT PEST CONTROL

- * Conduct annual aerial detection survey as well as a ground forest pest survey to determine extent and character of infestation.
- * Maintain program of poison ivy eradication along trails and roadsides.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- * Employ one full-time person and seasonal personnel that are fully trained and equipped for law enforcement purposes.
- * Continue to cooperate with local police departments regarding routine nightly patrol.
- * Continue to request assistance from the Division of Law Enforcement during peak use times at the Reservation.
- * Equip maintenance vehicles with two-way radios.

- * Maintain existing hiking trails and construct connector trails where needed.
- * Upgrade the educational exhibits at the Visitor's Center and interpretive programs.
- * Maintain all buildings used by the general public.

VISUAL RESOURCES

- * Prohibit construction of buildings on or near summit.
- * Continue efforts to prevent further construction of towers on the summit.
- * Develop and implement a landscaping plan for the summit.
- * Maintain outlook areas and enhance vistas.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

- * Implement special management considerations for the protection of the following species; raptor, turkey vulture, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, whip-poor-will, pileated woodpecker, winter wren, eastern bluebird, tree swallow and dark-eyed junco.
- * Provide field crops that will benefit area wildlife, wherever possible.
- * Improve wildlife habitat on marginal forested lands and agricultural lands.
- * Construct nesting boxes for wood ducks, song birds, and squirrels.

TRANSPORTATION

- * Encourage off summit parking.
- * Prohibit vehicles on the summit during periods of peak use, except for handicapped persons and emergency purposes.

- * Provide parking on the plateau southeast of the summit and on the site of the former summit road.
- * Modify vehicular traffic during peak use times to minimize confusion and maximize safety.
- * Improve oil surface of Administration Road.
- * Maintain for maximum safety all roads within the Reservation.

SILVICULTURE

Within the General Management Zone 1115 acres of the 1351 acres of land are designated for forestry practices. At all times the ultimate goal of the practice of silviculture will be the improvement and protection of the forestry resource.

The wide variety of tree species on Wachusett give the opportunity to manage for "mixed stands". This is one of the best deterrents to disease and pest epidemics. Through currently accepted, state of the art, silvicultural techniques, trees will be harvested for wood products on a sustained yield basis. When practical over mature and substandard trees will be removed and healthier trees will be retained to provide better seed stock and benefit wildlife.

- * During the first ten years approximately 290,000 board feet per year of timber will be removed.
- * Thereafter only 190,000 board feet per year will be removed since much of the unacceptable growing stock will have been eliminated with the increased removal for the first ten years.

